

# THE VALLEY of the GIANTS

Author of "Cappy Ricks"

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## "JULES RONDEAU!"

Synopsis.—Pioneer in the California redwood region, John Cardigan, at forty-seven, is the leading citizen of Sequoia, owner of mills, ships, and many acres of timber, a widower after three years of married life, and father of two-day-old Bryce Cardigan. At fourteen Bryce makes the acquaintance of Shirley Sumner, a visitor at Sequoia, and his junior by a few years. Together they visit the Valley of the Giants, sacred to John Cardigan and his son as the burial place of Bryce's mother, and part with mutual respect. While Bryce is at school John Cardigan meets with heavy business losses and for the first time since Bryce's birth with uncertainty. After graduation from college, and a trip abroad, Bryce Cardigan comes home. On the train he meets Shirley Sumner, on her way to Sequoia to make her home there with her uncle, Colonel Pennington. Bryce learns that his father's system has failed and that Colonel Pennington is seeking to take advantage of the old man's business misfortunes. John Cardigan is despairing, but Bryce is full of fight.

## CHAPTER V.—Continued.

John Cardigan shook his head. "I'm mortgaged to the last penny," he confessed, "and Pennington has been buying Cardigan Redwood Lumber company first-mortgage bonds until he is in control of the issue. He'll buy in the San Helein timber at the foreclosure sale, and in order to get it back and save something for you out of the wreckage, I'll have to make an unprofitable trade with him. I'll have to give him my timber adjoining his north of Sequoia, together with my Valley of the Giants, in return for the San Helein timber, to which he'll have a sheriff's deed. But the mill, all my old employees, with their numerous dependents—gone, with you left in despair and without a dollar to pay your taxes. Smashed—like that!" And he drove his fist into the palm of his hand.

"Perhaps—but not without a fight," Bryce answered, although he knew their plight was well-nigh hopeless. "I'll give you my money, or I'll know the reason." The telephone on the table beside him tinkled, and he took down the receiver and said "Hello."

"Mercy!" came the sweet voice of Shirley Sumner over the wire. "Do you feel as savage as all that, Mr. Cardigan?"

"For the second time in his life the thrill that was akin to pain came to Bryce Cardigan. He laughed. "If I had known you were calling, Miss Sumner," he said, "I shouldn't have growled so."

"Well, you're forgiven—for several reasons, but principally for sending me that delicious blackberry pie. Thank you so much."

"Glad you liked it, Miss Sumner. I dare to hope that I may have the privilege of seeing you soon again."

"Of course. One good pie deserves another. Some evening next week, when that dear old daddy of yours can spare his boy, you might be interested to see our burl-redwood-paneled dining room Uncle Seth is so proud of. Would Thursday night be convenient?"

"Perfectly. Thank you a thousand times."

"She bade him good-night. As he turned from the telephone, his father

and he added fiercely: "And I'll attend to the battle for Father. We may lose, but that man Pennington will know he's been in a fight before we finish."

He broke off abruptly, for he had just remembered that he was to dine at the Pennington house the following Thursday—and he was not the sort of man who smugly breaks bread with his enemy.

All about Bryce were scenes of activity, of human endeavor, and to him in that moment came the thought: "My father brought all this to pass—and now the task of continuing it is mine! All those men who earn a living in Cardigan's mill and on Cardigan's docks—those sailors who sail the ships that carry Cardigan's lumber into the distant parts of men—are dependent upon me; and my father used to tell me not to fail them. Must my father have wrought all this in vain? And must I stand by and see all this go to satisfy the overwhelming ambition of a stranger?" His big hands clenched. "No!" he growled savagely. "Give me your last five annual statements, Mr. Sinclair, please."

The old scrivener brought forth the documents in question. Bryce stuffed them into his pocket and left the office. Three quarters of an hour later he entered the little amphitheater in the Valley of the Giants and paused with an expression of dismay. One of the giants had fallen and lay stretched across the little clearing. In its descent it had demolished the little white stone over his mother's grave and had driven the fragments of the stone deep into the earth.

The fact that the tree was down, however, was secondary to the fact that neither wind nor lightning had brought it low, but rather the impious hand of man; for the great jagged stump showed all too plainly the marks of cross-cut saw and axe; a pile of chips four feet deep littered the ground.

For fully a minute Bryce stood dumbly gazing upon the sacrilege before his rage and horror found vent in words. "An enemy has done this thing!" he cried aloud to the wood-goblins. "And over her grave!"

It was a burl tree. At the point where Bryce paused a malignant growth had developed on the trunk of the tree, for all the world like a tremendous wart. This was the burl, so prized for table-tops and paneling because of the fact that the twisted, wavy, letter-skeeter grain lends to the wood an extraordinary beauty when polished. Bryce noted that the work of removing this excrescence had been accomplished very neatly. With a cross-cut saw the growth, perhaps ten feet in diameter, had been neatly sliced off much as a housewife cuts slice after slice from a loaf of bread. He guessed that these slices, practically circular in shape, had been rolled out of the woods to some conveyance waiting to receive them.

What Bryce could not understand, however, was the stupid brutality of the raiders in felling the tree merely for that section of burl. By permitting the tree to stand and merely building a staging up to the burl, the latter could have been removed without vital injury to the tree—whereas by destroying the tree the wretches had evidenced all too clearly to Bryce a wanton desire to add insult to injury.

"Poor old Dad!" he murmured. "I'm glad now he has been unable to get up here and see this. It would have broken his heart. I'll have this tree made into fence posts and the stump dynamited and removed this summer. After he is operated on and gets back his sight, he will come up here—and he must never know. Perhaps he will have forgotten how many trees stood in this circle."

He paused. Peeping out from under a chip among the litter at his feet was the moldering corner of a white envelope. In an instant Bryce had it in his hand. The envelope was dirty and weatherbeaten, but to a certain extent the redwood chips under which it had lain hidden had served to protect it, and the writing on the face was still legible. The envelope was empty and addressed to Jules Rondeau, care of the Laguna Grande Lumber company, Sequoia, California.

Bryce read and reread that address. "Rondeau!" he muttered. "Jules Rondeau! I've heard that name before—ah, yes! Dad spoke of him last night. He's Pennington's woods-boss and—"

Hence, if Rondeau had superintended the task of felling the tree, it must have been at the behest of a superior; and since a woods-boss acknowledges no superior save the creator of the pay-roll, the recipient of that stolen burl must have been Colonel Pennington.

Suddenly he thrilled. If Jules Rondeau had stolen that burl to present it to Colonel Pennington, his employer, then the finished article must be in



Bryce Strod Dumbly Gazing Upon the Sacrilege.

Pennington's home! And Bryce had been invited to that home for dinner the following Thursday by the Colonel's niece.

"I'll go, after all," he told himself. "I'll go—and I'll see what I shall see."

## CHAPTER VI

When Shirley Sumner descended to the breakfast room on the morning following her arrival in Sequoia, the first glance at her uncle's stately countenance informed her that during the night something had occurred to irritate Colonel Seth Pennington and startle him out of his customary bland composure.

"Shirley," he began, "did I hear you calling young Cardigan on the telephone after dinner last night or did my ears deceive me?"

"Your ears are all right, Uncle Seth. I called Mr. Cardigan up to thank him for the pie he sent over, and incidentally to invite him over here to dinner on Thursday night."

"I thought I heard you asking somebody to dinner, and as you don't know a soul in Sequoia except young Cardigan, naturally I opined that he was to be the object of our hospitality."

"I dare say it's quite all right to have invited him, but it's Uncle Seth?"

"Certainly, certainly, my dear. Quite all right, but, er—ah, slightly inconvenient. I am expecting other company Thursday night—unfortunately, Brynton, the president of the Bank of Sequoia, is coming up to dine and discuss some business affairs with me afterward; so if you don't mind, my dear, suppose you call young Cardigan up and ask him to defer his visit until some later date."

"Certainly, uncle. What perfectly marvelous roses! How did you succeed in growing them, Uncle Seth?"

He smiled sourly. "I didn't raise them," he replied. "That half-breed Indian that drives John Cardigan's car brought them around about an hour ago, along with a card. There it is, beside your plate."

She blushed ever so slightly. "I suppose Bryce Cardigan is vindictive himself," she murmured as she withdrew the card from the envelope. As she had surmised, it was Bryce Cardigan's. Colonel Pennington was the proprietor of a similar surmise.

"Fast work, Shirley," he murmured laconically. "I wonder what he'll send you for luncheon. Some dill pickles, probably."

She pretended to be very busy with the roses, and not to have heard him.

Shirley, left alone at the breakfast table, picked idly at the preserved flap of the ovalish butter set before her. Vaguely she wondered at her uncle's apparent hostility to the Cardigans; she was as vaguely troubled in the knowledge that until she should succeed in eradicating this hostility, it must inevitably act as a bar to the further progress of her friendship with Bryce Cardigan. And she told herself she did not want to lose that friendship. She wasn't the least bit in love with him, albeit she realized he was rather lovable. And lastly he was a good, devoted son and was susceptible of development into a congenial and wholly acceptable comrade to a young lady absolutely lacking in other means of amusement.

She finished her breakfast in thoughtful silence; then she went to

the telephone and called up Bryce. He recognized her voice instantly and called her name before she had opportunity to announce her identity.

"Thank you so much for the beautiful roses, Mr. Cardigan," she began.

"I'm glad you liked them. Nobody picks flowers out of our garden, you know. I used to, but I'll be too busy hereafter to bother with the garden. By the way, Miss Sumner, does your uncle own a car?"

"I believe he does—a little old run-down which he drives himself."

"Then I'll send George over with the Napier this afternoon. You might care to take a spin out into the surrounding country. By the way, Miss Sumner, you are to consider George and that car as your personal property. I fear you're going to find Sequoia a dull place; so whenever you wish to go for a ride, just call me up, and I'll have George report to you."

"But think of all the expensive gasoline and tires!"

"Oh, but you mustn't look at things from that angle after you cross the Rocky mountains on your way west. What are you going to do this afternoon?"

"I don't know. I haven't thought that far ahead."

"For some real sport I would suggest that you motor up to Laguna Grande. That's Spanish for Big Lagoon, you know. Take a rod with you. There are some land-locked salmon in the lagoon."

"But I haven't any rod."

"I'll send you over a good one."

"But I have nobody to teach me how to use it," she hinted daringly.

"I appreciate that compliment," he flashed back at her, "but unfortunately my holidays are over for a long time. I took my father's place in the business this morning."

"So soon?"

"Yes. Things have been happening while I was away. However, speaking of fishing, George Sea Otter will prove an invaluable instructor. He is a good boy and you may trust him implicitly. On Thursday evening you can tell what success you had with the salmon."

"Oh, that reminds me, Mr. Cardigan. You can't come Thursday evening, after all." And she explained the reason. "Suppose you come Wednesday night instead."

"We'll call that a bet. Thank you."

She chuckled at his frank good humor. "Thank you, Mr. Cardigan, for all your kindness and thoughtfulness; and if you will persist in being nice to me, you might send George Sea Otter and the car at one-thirty. I'll be glad to avail myself of both until I can get a car of my own sent up from San Francisco. Till Wednesday night, then. Good bye."

As Bryce Cardigan hung up, he heaved a slight sigh. It was difficult to get out of the habit of playing; he found himself the possessor of a very great desire to close down the desk, call on Shirley Sumner, and spend the remainder of the day basking in the sunlight of her presence.

Following his discovery of the outrage committed on his father's sanctuary, Bryce wasted considerable valuable time and effort in a futile endeavor to gather some further hint of the identity of the vandals; but despairing at last, he dismissed the matter from his mind, resolving only that on Thursday he would go up into Pennington's woods and interview the redoubtable Jules Rondeau. Bryce's natural inclination was to wait upon M. Rondeau immediately, if not sooner, but the recollection of his dinner engagement at the Pennington home warned him to proceed cautiously; for while harboring no apprehensions as to the outcome of a possible clash with Rondeau, Bryce was not so optimistic as to believe he would escape unscathed from an encounter.

Colonel Pennington's pompous imported British butler showed Bryce into the Pennington living room at six-thirty, announcing him with due ceremony. Shirley rose from the piano where she had been idly fingering the keys and greeted him with every appearance of pleasure—following which, she turned to present her visitor to Colonel Pennington, who was standing in his favorite position with his back to the fireplace.

"Uncle Seth, this is Mr. Cardigan, who was so very nice to me the day I landed in Red Bluff."

The Colonel bowed. "I have to thank you, sir, for your courtesy to my niece." He had assumed an air of reserve, of listless aloofness, despite his studied politeness.

"Your niece, Colonel, is one of those fortunate beings the world will always clamor to serve."

"Quite true, Mr. Cardigan. When she was quite a little girl I came under her spell myself."

"So did I, Colonel. Miss Sumner has doubtless told you of our first meeting some twelve years ago."

"Quite so. May I offer you a cocktail, Mr. Cardigan?"

"Thank you, certainly. Dad and I

have been pinning one on about this time every night since my return."

"Shirley belongs to the Band of Hope," the Colonel explained. "She's ready at any time to break a lance with the Demon Rum. So we will have to drink her share, Mr. Cardigan. Pray be seated."

Bryce seated himself. "Well, we lumbermen are a low lot and naturally fond of dissipation," he agreed. "I fear Miss Sumner's prohibition tendencies will be still further strengthened after she has seen the mad-train."

"What is that?" Shirley queried.

"The mad-train runs over your uncle's logging railroad into Township nine, where his timber and ours is located. It is the only train operated on Sunday, and it leaves Sequoia at five p. m. to carry the Pennington and Cardigan crews back to the woods after their Saturday-night celebration in town. As a usual thing, all hands with the exception of the brakemen, engineers, and firemen, are singing, weeping or fighting drunk."

"Do they fight, Mr. Cardigan?"

"Frequently. I might say usually. It's quite an inspiring sight to see a couple of tin snappers going to it on a flat-car traveling thirty miles an hour."

"How horrible!"

"Yes, indeed. The right of way is lined with empty whisky bottles."

Colonel Pennington spoke up. "We don't have any fighting on the mad-train any more," he said blandly.

"Indeed! How do you prevent it?" Bryce asked.

"My woods-boss, Jules Rondeau, makes them keep the peace," Pennington replied with a small smile. "If there's any fighting to be done, he does it."

"You mean among his own crew, of course," Bryce suggested.

"No, he's in charge of the mad-train, and whether a fight starts among your men or ours, he takes a hand. He's had them all behaving mildly for quite a while, because he can whip any man in the country, and everybody realizes it. I don't know what I'd do without Rondeau. He certainly makes those bobunks of mine step lively."

"Oh-h-h! Do you employ bobunks, Colonel?"

"Certainly. They cost less; they are far less independent than most men and more readily handled. And you don't have to pamper them—particularly in the matter of food. Why, Mr. Cardigan, with all due respect to your father, the way he feeds his men is simply ridiculous! Cake and pie and doughnuts at the same meal!"

"Well, Dad started in to feed his men the same food he fed himself."



"He Can Whip Any Man in the Country."

and I suppose the habits one forms in youth are not readily changed in old age, Colonel."

"But that makes it hard for other manufacturers," the Colonel protested. "I feed my men good plain food and plenty of it—quite better food than they were used to before they came to this country; but I cannot seem to satisfy them. Your respected parent is the basis for comparison in this country, Cardigan, and I find it devilishly inconvenient." He laughed indulgently and passed his cigarette-case to Bryce.

"Uncle Seth always grows restless when some other man is the leader," Shirley volunteered with a mischievous glance at Pennington. "Don't you, Nunky-dunk?"

"You know why, of course—those burl panels in your dining room."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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